

Illinois River Coordinating Council  
May 9, 2007, Meeting Minutes  
Illinois Department of Agriculture Auditorium  
Springfield, Illinois  
1:30pm

**Call to Order:**

Marc Miller, Office of Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the meeting to order at 1:30pm, and welcomed members and guests.

**Roll Call**

Marc Miller called the roll:

**Citizen Members**

Rich Gunther, Richard Worthen, Claudia Emken, Daphne Mitchell, Wendell Shauman

**State Agency Members**

Jared Thornley, Debbie Bruce, Charles Perino, Bruce Yurdin

**Ex-officio members**

Ron Fisher, Brad Thompson, Roy Deda, William Kruidenier, Christine Urban, Robert Holmes, William Gradle, Donald King, John Ronger, Lt. J.G. Erick Johnson

**Members Absent**

Doug Wilson, Director Jack Lavin, Margaret Frisbie

**Approval of Minutes:**

Marc Miller requested a motion to approve minutes from the Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007 meeting held at the Prisco community Center in Aurora Illinois. John Rogner moved to approve, seconded by Richard Worthen, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Opening Remarks:**

Marc Miller introduced Katie Stonewater as Erica Ott's Replacement. Ms. Stonewater is currently a Paul Simon Fellow with the Office of Lieutenant Governor.

**Member Comment Period:**

- Dr. Robert Holmes discussed several useful programs at the U.S. Geological Survey. First, the new Toxic Substances Hydrology Program provides objective scientific information on environmental contamination to improve characterization and management of contaminated sites, to protect human and environmental health, and to reduce potential future contamination problems. More information can be found at: <http://toxics.usgs.gov/about.html>

Also, the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) provides streamflow information and understanding required to meet local, state, regional, and national needs. Streamflow data from these stream gages are used for planning and decisions related to agriculture, industry, water supplies, navigation, riverine

habitat, riparian habitat, and flood hazard identification. For more information on the NSIP, please visit: <http://water.usgs.gov/nsip/>

Marc Miller stated that this information would be distributed through the Clean Water Action Alert email list.

- Wendell Shauman informed the group that Rollie Moore, a former Council member, has been seriously injured; however is expected to recover in a few months. The members expressed their wish for a speedy recovery.
- An announcement was made concerning the upcoming “It’s Our River Day” campaign. Marc Miller asked for cooperation and for the audience to send event ideas to the Lt. Governor’s Office. More information can be found at: [http://www.standingupforillinois.org/cleanwater/iord\\_index.php](http://www.standingupforillinois.org/cleanwater/iord_index.php)
- Claudia Emken from The Nature Conservancy of Illinois (TNC) gave a brief update on TNC’s Emiquon Preserve Project. There have been several hundred acres planted and news of the successful floodplain restoration is quickly spreading. For more information, please visit <http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/illinois/preserves/art1112.html>
- Brad Thompson, representing the Rock Island District Corps of Engineers briefly discussed the Illinois River Basin Restoration Comprehensive Plan that is on its way to the Sec. of the Army and then, on to Congress. Its progression is cause for excitement; more information can be found at <http://ilrdss.sws.uiuc.edu/govconf2005/session3c/Brad%20Thompson.pdf>

When Brad Thompson was asked about appropriations, it was stated that the President’s budget is out and the U.S. House is likely to act on it first; however, the Council will have to monitor its progress.

Marc Miller also added that U.S. Congressman LaHood’s office is working on obtaining more funding and this will be monitored.

- Debbie Bruce, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), gave a brief update concerning the Landowner Incentive Program. There is a second sign-up period for landowners to apply for funds to do restorations on their property. The ground does not have to be farmland, but other qualifications do apply. So far, applications for about 106 acres have been received and the IRCC is helping with administration of this program. Overall, we have about \$2.6 million available as we are working on more funding to include in this program. More information can be found at: [http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orc/conservation\\_programs/lip/index.htm](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orc/conservation_programs/lip/index.htm)

### **Discussion and Update on Legislation**

- W.R.D.A. – Marc Miller stated that the group is tracking this federal legislation (HR1495).

Wendell Shauman stated that there’s a fair amount of difference between the House and the Senate version. He believes that the administration is not happy

about the cost; however, this high cost could be due to the amount of time it has taken to pass. This cost could be higher if it doesn't pass this year.

Debbie Bruce stated that the House version has the Chicago Barrier in it; however, it does not have requested changes to Section 519: Illinois River Restoration. The Senate version also has the barrier and requested changes; however, there are many differences between the versions.

- Illinois Dam Safety Initiative – This initiative was launched by the Lt. Governor almost 12 months ago to address public safety at dams. The Office is working with House Republican Leader Tom Cross and Sen. Wilhelmi to pass legislation giving DNR the authority to create sign and buoy standards and create dam exclusion zones to protect citizens from drowning at run-of-the-river dams. Another element of the initiative is to study conditions at 25 publicly owned dams on public waterways. An independent contractor is conducting the study launched by the Capital Development Board, DNR, and the Lt. Governor's Office. There have been 10 deaths in the last 12 months at dam sites. The legislation is through the IL House and Senate Committee. Currently, it's on 3<sup>rd</sup> reading in the Senate. More information can be found at: <http://www.damsafe.org>

Lt. Governor Quinn asked when the study will be completed and Marc Miller stated that it should be done by June 15<sup>th</sup> and the Office of Lt. Governor has been involved in oversight of the study. The engineering firm is considering the option of dam removal at a number of dam sites.

- Phosphorus in Automatic Dishwashing Detergents – the Lt. Governor has been working towards a solution for this problem for two years. While this additive has been removed from laundry detergents it is still present in dishwashing detergent. HB 819 and SB 376 (identical bills) are progressing through the legislature as an agreed-to bill.
- Marc Miller mentioned that the Office is monitoring progress on the federal Farm Bill. This legislation authorizes many important programs impacting the Illinois River.

Lt. Governor Quinn mentioned that Illinois Congressman Tim Johnson sits on the House Agriculture Committee. Johnson was involved with the 2002 Farm Bill, however, a majority of congressmen have not taken part in writing a Farm Bill. This presents some real opportunities and the Council could possibly develop some new ideas.

- Lt. Governor Quinn discussed the prospects for a Capital Bill this year. He stated we are hoping to get water and open space issues discussed in the Bill. Also, there's a real need for school, road and public transit funding. Ideally, we would like to get "green" infrastructure more attention, specifically along our waterways.
- Currently, US fish and Wildlife Department is providing money to schools to work on rain gardens. Now in their third year, close to 60 rain gardens have been created throughout the State. It's a very good approach. This program provides an area where you can grow native Illinois plants while giving children a sense of awareness to the types of plants in Illinois.

Lt. Gov. Quinn stated his desire to call attention to these types of issues. “We need to help them realize their importance.” Currently, we are hoping for at least \$25 million on dam safety as well as for other issues.

### **Sangamon Conservancy Trust – John Hawkins**

The Sangamon Conservancy Trust, a not-for-profit organization, was formed to help support the goals and objectives of the Sangamon County Soil and Water Conservation District. Reduction of soil erosion, enhancement of water quality, and promotion of prime farmland protections are among their goals.

The Trust looks for projects and donations from landowners who believe in conservation and wish to preserve family farms. The trust uses tax incentives from the Pension Protection Act of 2006. They hold the conservation easement on the properties, work with educators to help the schools revitalize a wetland area to create awareness as well as bolster tourism.

There are about 30 similar trusts in the area; however, the Sangamon Conservancy Trust is one of the few that focuses on family farms transferred to the next generation and not just on natural areas.

The Sangamon Conservancy Trust works closely with CREP as well as with the city of Springfield in carrying out their goals. Additionally, the Trust promotes no-till farming and other conservation methods.

### **Hill Prairie Winery – Mark Lounsberry**

Mark Lounsberry stated, “I’ve been involved in agriculture all my life... I’m just a farm boy that found another way to stay in agriculture.” The winery is on the south bluff of the Sangamon River Valley and has used several programs since 1997. Lounsberry said, “It’s been a really good experience to see how these programs have helped us in our winery and I commend all of you; its nice to see a unit of government working to achieve the same goal.”

The winery has grown steadily since it opened and many people travel a long way to visit. Most of these individuals are part of the wine culture and are not random tourists.

Mark Lounsberry commented that, “We’ve always been the stewards of the land...for 7 going on 8 generations... we are more then just a wine shop.” More information can be found at <http://www.hillprairiewinery.com> in the town Oakford, IL.

### **Upper Sangamon Target Watershed Grant and Biomass Energy – Steve John, Agricultural Watershed Institute, Executive Director**

The highly collaborative grant from EPA works with a number of partnering institutions. The project was originally conceived and focused on farm-nitrogen rate trials. The importance of rate studies has decreased and the importance biomass market studies have increased. The most profitable possible market seems to be the mixture of biomass for coal-firing biomass plants. It is important to evaluate the possibility of growing switchgrass, prairie polycultures and miscanthus for use in home heating or for co-firing with coal in industrial cogeneration plants.

### **It's Our River Day – Jo Skoglund, Illinois Audubon Society**

September 15<sup>th</sup> -- We are trying to expand on this project through events of conservation, recreation and education. Communities are approached and urged to host events on this day. If a community is already hosting an event, we would like to find out what they are doing and help promote their activities. Many communities and organizations are participating by canoeing, kayaking, collecting garbage or even hosting full-blown festivals. The long-term goal is to get more people involved. Last year there were 60 events and we are hoping to have more this year. If you have any ideas, please contact Marc Miller. You don't have to be on the water to hold an event, and volunteers are always appreciated and needed.

### **Construction Site Runoff Monitoring – Stacy James, Prairie Rivers Network**

Ms. James spoke about construction sites and how construction site runoff can affect waterways. Many people do not know how construction sites impact natural resources.

Flooding from runoff causes property and vegetation damage, and carries pollution into waterways. Soil losses from construction sites often have higher erosion in a short time period than other land disturbance activities. (20-200 tons of soil run-off)

There are numerous controls on construction sites, but one potential solution is to educate citizens. Prairie Rivers Network has created an outreach program on construction site runoff monitoring and hopes to make a positive impact on the issue.

### **Aerial Survey of Streams – Bill White, State Water Survey**

White gave a presentation of aerial surveys of stream conditions and restoration sites. Through a partnership with NRCS, DNR and the Illinois Department of Agriculture, landowners in the Spoon River and the Cedar Creek watersheds are receiving assistance stabilizing streambanks, installing weirs and riffles. This basin is the second highest sediment producer in the Illinois River watershed.

Riffle and pool structures are designed and built to help prevent the transfer of sediment. Stream barbs and other structural elements help prevent the sediment transfer as well. About 50% of sediment in this watershed comes from stream banks.

### **Whole Farm CREP, Nature Preserve – Ron Bellrose**

Ron Bellrose is a landowner in Logan County and has used the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and the Nature Preserve System to restore and permanently protect his whole farm. In addition, he has used the Landowner Incentive Program and Natural Resource Damage Assessment funds to help enhance the property.

Mr. Bellrose has seen the waterways on his farm go from really good in the 1950s to really bad in the 1960s and now, the river has dramatically improved. Ron reports that the wildlife and vegetation are returning. He gives his thanks to those working within in the State of Illinois to ensure that these types of programs exist.

### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program update – IDNR**

Current enrollment: 124,530 acres; State easements: 78,000 acres. Since the 2005 CREP lottery, there have been 107 State easement applications enrolling 6,700 acres. A number of SWCDs have asked for outreach assistance. DNR will provide \$1,000 grants.

### **State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) CRP-560- Donald King, USDA-FSA**

Announced in March of 2007, State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) is a wildlife oriented continuous CRP cropland practice. SAFE allows producers to install practices that benefit high priority State wildlife conservation objectives through the use of targeted restoration of vital habitat. This cooperative conservation effort is based on locally developed conservation proposals that address the highest priority wildlife objectives in the State before the practice may be implemented.

Currently, about 20,000 acres in IL will be targeted for wildlife improvement. They are looking for groups to put together a package that will help target the areas for specific species. USDA-FSA is trying to find areas where improvements can be made. Proposals will be accepted until September 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Update on Gulf Hypoxia Task Force – Dennis McKenna, IDOA**

As a major export area of nitrate to the Gulf of Mexico, the state of IL is represented on the national task force along with other states (primarily those on the Mississippi River)

In 2001 the action plan was adopted to reduce hypoxia. However, in the last six years, there have been no new Federal dollars towards this program. Despite this, there have been some efforts made by individual States and NGOs to help make a difference.

Overall, there's been no real substantial change in hypoxia in the past 10 years. The zone is larger but there is a decrease in stream flow, nitrate release and other factors. Recent modeling indicates a 35-45 percent reduction is needed.

Questions about nitrogen in streams and soil mineralization in research shows that this issue is more complicated than first thought.

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### **Other Business**

Robert (Bob) Frazee, from the University of Illinois Extension Program wanted to extend an invitation to the 2007 Governor's Conference on Management of the Illinois River System. He also thanked the Lt. Governor and his staff (Marc Miller and Erica Ott) for their help. More information on the conference can be found at: <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/state/newsdetail.cfm?NewsID=7192>

### **Public Comment Period**

No public comment

### **Adjournment**

Motion by Richard Worthen

Second by Daphne Mitchell

Meeting adjourned at 4:20pm

The next meeting will be held August 16<sup>th</sup> at 1pm at Principia College in Elsah, IL. (<http://www.prin.edu>)